Southeast Regional Collaboration for Health Information Technology and Health Information Exchange

SERCH is the Southeast Regional Collaboration for Health information Technology (HIT) and Health Information Exchange (HIE). SERCH was organized in April 2010, when an informal group of states met with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to discuss issues pertaining to common regional solutions for HIT and HIE. The focus of SERCH is to share knowledge, coordinate resources across grant programs within and between the states, and to align program and policy decisions as much as practical. In addition, SERCH provides a forum for states to consider partnering with each other to advance the goals of HIT, as new grant opportunities arise. Engaging in collaborative efforts of this nature could be beneficial to furthering the HIT goals of the states involved.

SERCH members include representatives from 11 Southeast region states (**AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA**)—this includes state level Medicaid staff, HIE staff, Regional Extension Center (REC) staff, state public-private partnerships, and HIT Coordinators -- joining in conversation with our federal and regional partners from the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC), CMS, and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). SERCH collaboration topics include RTI Disaster Preparedness Grant, Medicaid Management RFI, Various Subgroups (Communications, Eligibility), Regional CMS Q&A sessions (ongoing) and periodic surveys regarding "hot topics." These topics are discussed during regularly scheduled weekly conference calls taking place on the first, second, third and fourth Thursdays of each month.

In the spring of 2011, CMS made the decision that SERCH would need to fund a full-time coordinator position to keep up with the collaboration's rapid expansion. Kentucky stepped in and took over the role of coordinating and facilitating the regularly scheduled weekly conference calls. A request for funding for the position was submitted to CMS and approved in the HITECH State Medicaid Health Information Technology Plan (SMHP) to be covered under Medicaid 90/10 funding. At this time, a decision was also made to divide the collaboration efforts into two groups. The first pertaining to the ongoing development of the HIE and the second pertaining to the Medicaid Eligibility and Enrollment system requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the varying developments in the establishment of statewide Health Insurance Exchanges (HIX).

To date the SERCH group has focused collaboration and information sharing on various efforts including, improving Electronic Health Record (EHR) adoption by providers, facilitating states on their EHR Incentive programs that issue incentive payments to providers, the DIRECT project and its introduction by the ONC as a measure to meet Meaningful Use through shared messaging, Regional Extension Centers (RECs) and provider outreach. In addition to enhancing partnerships between Statewide Health Information Exchanges and RECs to meet future meaningful use measures for the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN), the HIX collaboration has provided webinars and conference calls hosting vendor presentations for solutions for Eligibility and Enrollment. SERCH has also served as a

platform for CMS to provide and gather a variety of updates pertaining to the new ACA regulations to and from multiple states.

SERCH has been cited as a "one stop shop" for HIE/HIX in the southeast region and has facilitated relations between its members by providing contact information. It provides a common SharePoint platform (in addition to being hosted on the Medicaid HITECH website) for states to share IAPDs, RFPs as well as other information on how to leverage 90/10 funding and Level One Establishment Grant funding for both the HIE and HIX. SERCH coordination has also been heavily involved in the planning of the Fourth Annual CMS Multi-State Medicaid HITECH Conference, where state and federal partners will share best practices and lessons learned on issues related to implementation, financing, operations, and other areas that will help demonstrate the value and impact of health information technology and health information exchange. This conference is also an opportunity for state and federal entities to collaborate with agencies such as the ONC, HRSA, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Indian Health Service (IHS), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).